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SUBJECT: CARICOM Likely to Observe Haiti Elections

¶1. SUMMARY. CARICOM officials communicated two wildly inconsistent messages on December 15 regarding the CARICOM's intention to send observers to the upcoming Haitian elections. CARICOM official told PolOff that CARICOM has not made a decision yet whether to send observers but continues to follow the situation closely. Conversely, Hugh Cholmondeley, who heads the CARICOM Task Force on Haiti, said later in the day that CARICOM would send a team of at least six to observe the Haiti elections. Cholmondeley's statement that the observer mission will happen is far more credible. END SUMMARY.

¶2. PolOff spoke with CARICOM Programme Manager for Foreign Policy and Community Relations Charmaine Atkinson-Jordan midday December 15 to gauge CARICOM's intent to observe the upcoming Haitian elections. She said that CARICOM has not made a decision yet and expressed doubt that the scheduled January 8 election date would hold. She said that although Cholmondeley was closest to the issue, St. Lucian Prime Minister Kenny Anthony, as CARICOM's current Chairman of Conference, would have to take the lead in pushing for the observer mission. Atkinson-Jordan said CARICOM's decision whether to send observers will depend on two key issues: -- Availability of funding. She said that two or more years ago CARICOM had set aside some funding for a Haiti observation mission never undertaken. CARICOM is now ascertaining whether these funds are still available to use for a Haiti observer mission at this time. Regardless, she indicated that CARICOM would need additional funds quickly in order to send a mission. -- Security situation. In light of the hostile reception that the Dominican President Fernandez received earlier this week, she said that CARICOM is reluctant to send observers into such a volatile security situation.

¶3. Also on December 15, EconOff attended a media outreach event hosted by CARICOM Secretary-General Ambassador Edwin Carrington at CARICOM's headquarters. During the session Cholmondeley said that CARICOM would send observers to Haiti. He said his remark was "off-the-record" but made it in Carrington's presence. He said that funding was in place for the team of six observers and that the international community has asked CARICOM to supply an additional twenty observers. He said that CARICOM is prepared to send the additional observers and funding exists to logistically support them, but CARICOM must still secure funding to pay their salaries.

¶4. COMMENT. The contradictory message on observers for Haitian elections reflects an organizational disconnect at CARICOM. However, Cholmondeley's statement that the observer mission will happen is far more credible. He is the senior-most CARICOM official dealing exclusively with Haiti and he is Carrington's confidante. It is highly unlikely that he would confirm the plan to send observers in

front of the media and Carrington if the decision were still pending. END COMMENT.

BULLEN